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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001996

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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETINGS WITH KRG PRESIDENT  
MASSOUD BARZANI AND PM NECHIRVAN BARZANI

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: During June 13-14 meetings in Erbil with Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani and Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, Deputy Secretary Negroponte urged strong and visible KRG action against the terrorist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) to prevent Turkish military action prior to Turkey's upcoming elections. The Deputy Secretary stressed that the tense political environment in Turkey could easily lead to an attack on the Kurdistan Region, particularly if KRG leaders fail to make statements or take visible actions against the PKK. Both Kurdish leaders claimed to have taken many actions against the PKK, but complained of Turkish rebuffs to their attempts to establish direct relations with the Turkish government. Massoud said he was "ready to help" in response to the Deputy's request that he make a public statement against the PKK. Nechirvan committed to reaching a compromise on draft hydrocarbons legislation such that a deal could be finalized by June 17. The Deputy Secretary emphasized similar criticality in reaching agreement on other key reconciliation measures such as Constitutional Review, de-Baathification reform, and provincial elections. Massoud acknowledged the importance of preparing the Kurdish street for the likelihood that a referendum on Kirkuk would not happen in 2007. End Summary.

12. (C) Accompanying the Deputy Secretary on his trip to Erbil were S/I David Satterfield and the DCM. At various points, the Deputy Secretary met individually with Massoud and Nechirvan, as well as with both of them together. Throughout the conversations, the Deputy Secretary referenced the June 12 telephone call from President Bush to President Barzani. He stressed that President Bush hoped to see clear progress on key issues such as hydrocarbons legislation and reducing tensions with Turkey over the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) terrorist organization.

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Turkey and PKK  
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13. (C) The Deputy Secretary repeatedly emphasized to Massoud and Nechirvan the critical importance of KRG actions and statements against the PKK. Cross-border attacks by the PKK against Turkey were playing heavily in the Turkish political debate in the lead-up to elections. The KRG should do everything possible to try to calm the situation. S/I Satterfield reiterated the Deputy Secretary's remarks, stressing that it was critical that the KRG gave the Turks no excuse to attack. Describing the PKK as similarly an enemy of the KRG, Massoud replied that the KRG had taken and would continue to take "the actions it could" against the PKK. However, there was no military solution to the PKK problem. Massoud asserted that "everyone would lose" if Turkey attacked across the border. He described the difficulty for both Turkey and the KRG in going after the group, as the PKK "has no headquarters" and operate with great flexibility in

the mountains. At the same time, both Massoud and Nechirvan said they believed that true Turkish motivations were not against the PKK, but rather against the KRG -- "they are unhappy with what we have gained here." Massoud described the duality of the KRG's complex relationship with Turkey, noting the contradiction of extensive Turkish investment in the KRG with what he characterized as "threats from Ankara."

14. (C) Massoud said that the previous day the PKK had declared a ceasefire. This had been discussed before with General Ralston and he thought it was a good idea. However, the ceasefire had been rebuffed by the Turks. S/I Satterfield stated that the situation with regard to the PKK was tense when he had visited Turkey the month before -- "anything could send the Turks over the edge." He noted positive statements by some Turkish leaders, including FM Gul, stating that an attack on the KRG would be "bad for all" and that the fight against the PKK should be in Turkey, not Iraq.

15. (C) The Deputy Secretary noted the existence of political organizations affiliated with the PKK, including the Kurdish Democratic Society Party (KDSP). Massoud said that during elections his Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) opposed participation by the KDSP, but was overruled by electoral officials in Baghdad. Massoud described Turkey's relationship with the KRG as paradoxical, noting the high level of Turkish investment in the KRG mixed with "threats from Ankara." He complained that the Turks had canceled a planned trip by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan to Ankara. Nechirvan stated that the "U.S. had to help the KRG with Turkey." Nechirvan contrasted the Turkish position with that of the Iranians, who "do not threaten the KRG" despite the presence of a significant Kurdish population in Iran. S/I

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Satterfield replied that the U.S. had urged the Turks to receive Nechirvan and that the U.S. and the Kurds should look for an opportunity after elections for the Turks and KRG to meet, perhaps at a quiet level.

16. (C) Massoud asked what the KRG could further do to calm the current situation with Turkey. The Deputy Secretary suggested a public statement by Massoud saying he had met with the Deputy Secretary and that he had stated in the conversation that he and the KRG neither supported the PKK nor approved of its using Iraq as a sanctuary. Massoud said that remained the KRG's policy and there was no evidence otherwise. S/I Satterfield emphasized that the Turks pay close attention to "every word" coming from Erbil on this issue and that the U.S. position would be in a stronger position to help the KRG in Ankara if such a statement were made. Massoud replied that the U.S. had "the KRG's support" on this and that he was "ready to help."

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Hydrocarbons Legislation, Reconciliation Goals, Article 140  
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17. (C) In conversations with Massoud and Nechirvan, the Deputy Secretary noted Iraqi progress on hydrocarbons revenue sharing legislation. He stressed the importance of reaching a final deal soon, urging that it be completed by the time he met with President Bush on June 18. It remained important for Iraqi leaders to demonstrate progress both to their own people and to the international community. Both Kurdish leaders stated that their primary concern remained where and how oil revenues were distributed to the regions -- the KRG sought a transparent and detailed system for disbursement of revenues. Nechirvan committed to negotiating with the other Iraqi parties throughout the weekend with the goal of achieving a compromise in the next several days.

18. (C) The Deputy Secretary similarly stressed the importance of progress on other key political steps for reconciliation. He expressed concern about what appeared to be slow movement

toward finalizing the Constitutional Review process, de-Baathification reform, and provincial council elections. He noted that the Kurds shared responsibility for this slow movement; it remained absolutely imperative that the GOI and Council of Representatives begin to show results on the goals that Iraq had set for itself.

¶9. (C) The Deputy Secretary raised with both leaders the issue of Article 140, and that a referendum on Kirkuk and other disputed territories would be impossible to hold in 2007 given that few steps had been taken toward this goal, nor had any side developed a workable solution. Massoud acknowledged that a referendum was unlikely this year and the importance of preparing the Kurdish street for this outcome.

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Golden Mosque Bombing  
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¶10. (C) The Deputy Secretary raised with Massoud the issue of the June 13 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra. He expressed concern about heightened sectarian violence in response to the attack. Massoud agreed that Sunni-Shia violence could rise in wake of the attack, and pinned responsibility on Al-Qaeda Iraq (AQI), likely foreign fighters. He noted that a recent car bombing in Erbil had been carried out by AQI -- the Saudi born perpetrator died in the attack, but the KRG arrested the mastermind of the operation. Massoud also commented that one of the most dangerous AQI members had been killed in Mosul the day before. Massoud said that nearly all the "major bombings" in Iraq are carried out by AQI, while former Baathists were responsible for most sniper attacks.

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U.S. Assistance to the Peshmerga  
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¶11. (C) During the Deputy Secretary's meeting with Nechirvan, KRG Deputy Prime Minister Omar Fatah asserted that, while Kurdish forces "share U.S. values" and "you can count us as your own," they needed even more training and material support. He specifically pointed to needs for the Kurdish border police and internal police -- "honesty and integrity are not enough."

¶12. (U) The Deputy Secretary has cleared this reporting message.  
CROCKER